Restoration at City of Baytown, Texas

Increasing benefits through combined Remediation and Restoration

The Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) is a process that allows state and federal agencies to recover damages from a spill or release of toxic materials that causes injury to resources under their jurisdiction. Beginning in the 1970's, releases of hazardous substances entered into the San Jacinto River from the Superfund site, located near Crosby, Texas. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) trust resources use the lower San Jacinto River 10 km below the site as nursery and spawning habitat. The Superfund law (CERCLA) provides the mechanism for resource agencies to ask for compensation from the responsible parties for injuries to natural resources resulting from site-specific contamination.

Negotiations between the resource agencies and the French Limited Trust Group (representing all the responsible parties) settled on the creation of 25 acres of intertidal wetlands in the San Jacinto floodplain as appropriate compensation for natural resource injuries. The location of the restoration project, the deteriorated Brownwood Subdivision of Baytown, was chosen through a consensus-based selection process.

Close-up of restored wetlands

Restored marsh at French Limited site, Baytown, Texas

Working with the Parks and Recreation Department of the city of Baytown, the resource agencies, and the public, the French Limited Trust Group was able to create a 60-acre tidal marsh, with associated uplands.

The French Limited Trust Group undertook this operation with the resource agencies serving in oversight capacity. During the development of this project the Trust Group expanded the actual area to be restored in order to create a buffer zone around the developing wetlands. The project included removal of concrete slabs that once supported homes and served as driveways, etc. Much of the concrete was broken and serves as wave barriers or to reduce erosion at the mouth of the tidal cuts that now open into the bay. A few islands of higher ground were left in place and used to create some freshwater ponds and enhance the growth of hardwood trees. Several species of hardwood trees were planted on these islands in order to increase habitat diversity.

Because of effective partnerships, 60 acres of salt marsh were rapidly restored to a thriving wetland that provides valuable nursery habitat for blue crab, shrimp, flounder, striped bass, and other commercial and recreational species.

For additional information, call Ron Gouguet at 206/526-6938 or Jessica White at 214/665-2217 or visit our Web site at **http://response.restoration.noaa.gov/cpr/cpr.html**.

May 2005

U.S. Department of Commerce • National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration • NOAA's National Ocean Service